critical digest

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EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus

June 27, 1956 Vol VIII No 19 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter $25 year $6.50 quarter

This Week

Vivian Blaine, Steven McQueen and Roxanne enter Hatful of Rain 7/2.

Summer Debuts

Sticks and Stones- revue with Hermione Gingold opens Jun 30 at Easthampton, NY.

What's The Rush- revue with Robert Q Lewis opens June 25 at Binghamton, NY.

Love Out of Town -new play by William McCleery opens Jun 27 at Peterborough, NH

Lesser Comores- new play by Albert Husson, adapted by Sue Davidson, opens at New Hope, PA. June 18.

Matinee Fella

Richard Torigi will sing the title role of Most Happy Fella at the Wed and Sat. matinees. Robert Weede will sing all the evening performances.

Digests of Comments on Summer Shows

Beasop's Fables- with Beatrice Lillie started its summer travels at Andover, NJ. Herridge, Post, found little in the touring revue that was new, but found the evening fun. 2 of the 4 sketches presented could stand editing, drama editor suggested... The Chalk Garden- with Lillian and Dorothy Gish should have a successful barn tour, predicts Doul, Variety, after viewing package at Westport, Conn. Critic thought revised version of script clarifies the play and makes it much livelier theatre.

Stairway to Nowhere- new melodrama by Ira Marion which debuted at Westboro, Mass, was panned by Bark, Variety, as an ordeal by Guy, Variety, in which the actors torture themselves and the audience for 2 hours... The Marriage Wheel- new comedy by Joel Climenhaga tried at Dallas' Theatre '56 was billed as trite by Variety mugg, only the interest and animation of a capable cast keep it going.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

Show Boat- Jones Beach June 21 - large-size outdoor version of musical classic was cheered by all the NYC daily reviewers. 6000 seat stadium and block long stage, plus a real show-boat was recommended to all for cool, pleasant outdoor theatre entertainment. Funke, Times, thought the Guy Lombardo production was the sweetest and best of the bills presented at Jones Beach. Lavish and magnificent added Beckley, Herald Tribune. Large cast headed by Paul Hartman, Gloria Hamilton, and Hal Leroy shared plaudits. Coleman, mirror, agreed this revival was best show yet at beach stadium. Superior entertainment for the entire family, reccommends Lapole, Journal American.

Aquashow-Flushing Meadows-7/20. Elliott Murphy's 12th annual outdoor watershow, revue, etc was listed as the best ever in its own classic tradition. Calta, Times, Beckley, Herald Tribune, Herridge, Post, Levinson, World-Telegram-Sun, and McClain, Journal American, okayed it as clean, popular priced outdoor entertainment.

A statue of George M. Cohan will be erected at Broadway and 46th St, the South end of Duffy Square. Oscar Hammerstein, 2nd, heads a committee to raise funds for the $75,000 statue to be built next year. The City Park Department will plant trees in the area.

Plays

Janus and Pipe Dream close this week ...Shangri-La will close unless business picks up by week's end... Middle of the Night closes for vacation until August 27, Inherit the Wind vacations to Sept 14... Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter moves to Shubert July 9... Most Happy Fella will not increase its prices in September as scheduled... Li'l Abner musical due at St. James Oct 13... Best House in Naples to open in NY Nov 8... The Apple Cart due at Plymouth Oct 18... Candide musical at Martin Beck Nov 22... Bells are Ringing musical with Judy Holliday at Shubert, NY, Nov 29.

Players

Frank Roberts subs for Harry Ellerbe, Desk Set... Georges Guetary considered as male lead of Happy Hunting... Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, named drama consultant on CBS TV Omnibus... Morton DaCosta to direct Auntie Mame... Charles Laughton will direct Major Barbara... Mae West considering bringing Come On Up, Ring Twice summer package to Broadway this fall... Henri Caubisens, stage manager of Most Happy Fella, has written a play, French We Are, which may be produced in NY.

Legal Dept.

New Faces of '56 has been permitted to cut its orchestra from 24 to 13 men at $186 week. The seating capacity of the house has been cut from 1064 to 999 to take advantage of the union concession... The Brass Section producers, Cohen & Alswang, have filed suit against $64,000 Question sponsor charging Revlon with persuading Hal March to break legit play contract to stay on TV show.

Summer Playhouses

Paul Green will write a new play about Jamestown, Virginia, to be presented starting next summer at Williamsburg, in place of his The Common Glory... Package of $3.30 ticket and railroad transportation to Show Boat priced at $4.95, special trains leaving Long Island Railroad station at 6 45 PM and 7 19 PM... Cross Right Stage opens 3rd season June 30, Highfield Theatre, Falmouth, Mass... American Legion Theatre, Ephrata, Pa, opens season with Edward Everett Horton in Nina... Theatre-by-the-Sea, Matunuck, RI, opens with Tea and Sympathy.

Vaudeville

Wally Brown, Flourney Miller and Manton Moreland, George Nicolls and Rene, Baron Bufke and Mitzi's Can Can Girls on new Palace vaude bill.

Theatre TV Notes

CBS-TV acquired rights to Green Pastures and Three Men on a Horse, both slated for 90 minute TV productions next season.

Other Broadways

Pajama Game and Teahouse August Moon companies in Boston... Bad Seed and Joy Ride revue continue in Chicago... The Boy Friend visits Denver... Anastasia, Silk Stockings and Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter in Los Angeles, Anniversary Waltz, Inherit the Wind and Rosalinda in San Francisco... Damn Yankees in Seattle.

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

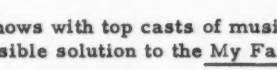
CRITICAL CONFAB... An international conference of drama critics attended by 124 reviewers was held in Paris, reports former NY press agent Wolfe Kaufman in Variety. A temporary office will be set up in Paris, international drama press cards will be issued, and the preliminary costs will be underwritten by the French Syndicate of Critics. NY Drama Critics Circle members will be eligible, also probably a goodly portion of Drama Desk, and the Foreign Drama Critics Association. Robert Kemp, Le Monde, was elected president. The first sessions became explosive on the subject of foreign critics getting press tickets abroad.

COLUMN TIPS... Orson Welles has concluded a deal with O'Neill's widow to produce, direct and act in Long Day's Journey Into the Night; reports Walker... United Artists set to buy Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter, hears Wilson.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... The ceaseless exploits of Jayne Mansfield, Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter, have paid off, notes McClain, Journal American. Many a tired businessman has found a new interest in the theatre and in her show.... McHarry, News, warns press agents that starting this week he will throw away unopened all sealed mail. Reporter figures he has torn open 100,000 envelopes over a 20 year period. He can recall less than a dozen worth the mucilage and effort to open. All releases he will get in sealed envelopes will be thrown away.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Extra shows with top casts of musicals at off-hours suggested by a C.D. subscriber as a possible solution to the My Fair Lady ticket problem.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Three enterprising young Philadelphians have actually done what many Broadway producers have no doubt considered, but have never carried out, Coleman, Mirror, notes in his interview with Westbury, LI, Music Fair producers Guber, Ford and Gross. The producers drew 125,000 at their Valley Forge, Pa, Music Fair last summer and started the current season with a hefty advance. They are ploying back this experience and profits into the 2000 seat Long Island tent. ..Sidney Kay, The Man with the Golden Arm, prepared for his role as Sparrow by hanging out with Bowery bums, he told Herridge, Post. They want to belong and don't, he discovered.



PROS & CONS BY TMK

Summer theatre fans, like winter theatre fans, are strange, interesting folk, Broadway shows close by the score because New Yorkers and out-of-towners will not support them in hot weather. But these same fans flock to see the recent musical and comedy hits which crowd the summer package circuit.

An international federation of drama critics, as detailed above, is an interesting aspect of the theatre union movement. Up to this point everyone concerned with legit, except critics and audiences have been unionized. Now with the critics taking a giant step forward, one can only wonder how long it will be before the theatre fans of the world unite.

OFF BROADWAY

A Doll's House closes at Greenwich Mews July 1... The Man With the Golden Arm has extended its run thru July 29 at Cherry Lane... The 3 one act Chekhov plays switched opening date to July 5 at Contemporary Theatre, 15 Second Avenue... Theatre 12 has leased Cherry Lane for season starting Oct 1.

Next Greenwich Mews play will be Langston Hughes' Simply Heavenly due in fall... Ira Cirker and Jack Farren have leased Jan Hus, 351 E 74 for next season. They will present new plays by young playwrights and new plays of merit that failed on Broadway. Take a Giant Step will be the opener in Sept. ... The Iceman Cometh trip to Holland is off because of insufficient time for ANTA to get State Dept cultural aide... Tempo's The Maids being presented Saturday and Sunday at 6 40 PM... Epic cast album of Littlest Revue, which recently closed at Phoenix, will be released June 25.

By Hex, new musical play based on Amish of Lancaster, Pa. presented at Tempo Playhouse, 4 St. Marks Place, was applauded by Gelb, Times, Coleman, Mirror, and Herridge, Post. Times man found score pleasant and literate, performers fresh and winsome. Mirror reviewer billed it as refreshingly simple. Post drama editor listed it as a fairly pleasant evening in a simple way, but she did not think Tempo should be presenting such musicals. Peper, World Telegram & Sun, vetoed the entire proceedings, labeling it a flat little show inspite of some nice people. Wynne Miller and Ken Cantril were praised by all.

THEATRE RECORD COMMENTS

"Great Moments in Show Business", Epic's catalog disc was praised by Herm, Variety. Included are Walter Huston's rendition of "September Song", Eddie Cantor's "Little Curly Hair in a High Chair", Bill Robinson's "Doin the New Low Down." Also Durante, Clayton and Jackson's "I Know Darn Well I Can Do Without Broadway." Other items are by Burns & Allen, Fred Astaire, Eddie Anderson and Cliff Edwards. Despite vintage of latter sides, trade paper mugg notes, the over-all sound quality has been brought to a high-level.

THEATRE TV COMMENTS

"Happy Birthday" production on NBC-TV Producer's Showcase featuring Betty Field in role created by Helen Hayes was panned by Gould, Times, as very tepid theatre. Main reason was miscasting of leading role.

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